No. 56.

THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

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Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.

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FOR PARAGRAPHS UNDER THE WORD "ANS." THE EDITOR IS PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE.

February, 1894.

QUESTION CCLXXIX.

What finally becomes of thoughts, both good and bad, sent out by human beings?

Ans.—Thought is a form of force, and is therefore subject to the laws which regulate all force. Force is persistent and effective in proportion to its intensity, and any output of it might endure perpetually if it encountered neither friction nor obstacle. But in considering the actual operation of force in Nature we need to remember two facts: *first*, that no force is infinite, each (excluding such as are exercised directly by the Grand Architect of the Universe) proceeding from a finite source and having therefore but a finite quality; *second*, that every force instantly encounters other and opposite forces, besides impinging on surroundings which gradually fritter it away. Thus a heavy sea aroused by a gale gradually subsides as friction with the circumjacent water and air weakens it, and at last sinks to its original quiet. A railway train loses its impetus as contact with the track and opposition of the air

operate against it. So with human emotions. An outbreak of anger arouses resentment in those subjected to it, and they in turn exhibit ill-feeling which spreads perhaps in many and unforeseen directions; but the original author loses his wrath as it expends itself and as other interests press upon and cancel it, and like experience comes to each of those, far and near, who were affected by it. Some conditions may be brought about which have permanent endurance, as when a vindictive blow maims a victim, but in time the inconvenience is less felt and bitterness abates. It is a wise, a merciful, provision of Nature that time has always a balm, and that no one emotion can forever defy the influence of distance and pressing interests and new demands. No matter how far or how powerfully an emotional force may extend, it cannot retain always its primal vigor, for otherwise a part would be equal to the whole, *i.e.*, the force, less abrasion by friction and loss by opposition, would be as when it started. But this is impossible.

Similarly with thoughts,— mental force. They arise in the mind spontaneously or by excitation from without, and in very various degrees of distinctness and power take shape. Sometimes they are ill-defined and momentary, flitting across the brain as airy, formless clouds. Sometimes they are precise and strong, clear and cogent creations of deliberation. Sometimes they are dwelt upon and elaborated, finished in character and detail, then vitalized by a conscious and sustained purpose. Naturally each has its proportionate result. The airy fantasies dissolve into nothing. The distinct projections have the influence their vividness contains. The purposeful plans work out large or small effect as their potency provides. But none are eternal, for they have not a continuously-renewing power behind them, and they encounter many other thoughts as virile, as positive, as motived as they, sapping their energy or directly combatting them. So in time they die out.

But does no thought leave permanent effect? Surely. Intellectual thought does. It may be traced in two ways,—in historic record and in national character. The Greek philoso-

phical writings and artistic creations are an enduring influence in the world of literature and art, and the Roman genius for legislation has left its impress on all succeeding civilization. Our philosophy, sculpture, architecture, civic law are patent proofs of how the old thinkers still mould us.

All this, however, is within historic eras, and is embodied in easily-multiplied books and in undecaying stone. But of civilizations without some record we can trace no influence. There must have been copious and potent thought, but it passed away when did its monuments. We are not the legatees of prehistoric culture.

But the thought contemplated by the question is evidently that of individuals, and probably as towards each other. Well, of this it may be said, as of thought in general, that it endures only in proportion to its distinctness and its strength. Good and bad thoughts die out unless energized by distinct purpose. Other people are thinking of the same individuals as we are, often with contrary sentiments which neutralize ours, for theirs must have as much potency. So in the general clash and friction many must come to nought. Probably a good many others fall flat because the object cares nothing about them, just as a sturdy nature is unaffected by an east wind or a hot day to which he is indifferent. As people grow in intelligent perception and in independence of thought, the opinion of most others comes to be of very little consequence, since it is seen to have such small base of reason or dispassionateness. Life is too short to bother over the notions of the incompetent. Then not a few thoughts are powerless against us because our own mental habitudes are too robust to be thus pierced. So that of thoughts, as of seeds from a plant, many perish as soon as set loose, many soon disappear after imperfect life, and a few fall into fertile soil where they germinate and bear lasting results.

W. Q. J.—So far as the remarks of the editor go they are very just, but a wider field appears to have been overlooked. It has been said that "thoughts are things", an assertion with which I am prepared to agree entirely; and I also firmly

believe that the time is not far off when their substantiality will he recognized and understood by science more fully than at present.

A thought implies many things besides pure force exerted. If force is exerted, then there must be that which exercises it. What is this, and what is the effect of the exercise? When we think, it is known that there is a disturbance or disintegration of the grey matter of the brain. But next we must observe that there is at the same time physiological disturbance, change, or alteration in the whole frame. For instance; a thought of shame or disaster or punishment may bring all over the body a hot flush or a cold shiver; the thought of a great danger just escaped has made men dizzy and women faint. Is there nothing in this? Further, each thought makes a picture, save perhaps a purely metaphysical syllogism, but even there it is difficult to escape the formulating by the mind of some concrete illustration as the syllogism proceeds; and even in pure mathematics it will be impossible for the thinker to prevent the rising up of a picture of the figures used in the operation, because from youth the numerals were impressed on his memory. Going on with this, we see that clairvoyants report that each thought makes a flash or picture objective to the inner sense, and from all the experiments in hypnotism we find that the old claim of occultism that each thought makes a definite picture must be true. Every clear seer will confirm this from personal experience. Still further; the astral light being a preserver of these pictures like a photographic plate, it follows that every thought has its picture preserved, and by that means what has been done or is being done may be known unerringly. Therefore thoughts, while they may be fugitive so far as concerns the thinker, are not so otherwise, but persist as seeds for good or evil in the whole race.

But, still more, every thought leaves a seed in the mind or manas of the thinker, no matter how fugitive the thought was. The whole sum of such small seeds will go to make up a larger seed for thought, and thus constitute a man of this, that, or the other general character. Thoughts, then, are highly im-

portant, for, as the Buddha said, we are made up of thought and built of thought; as we think, so we act and will act, and as we act and think so will we suffer or rejoice, and the whole world with us.

QUESTION CCLXXX.

Members of the T.S. are continually urged to study and to try to understand the doctrines, and yet we are told that individual progress depends more on what we do for the Cause than on any effort put forth for ourselves. If one isolates himself for study without attending the meetings or even joining the Society, what is to hinder his progress?

B.—All real progress in man is an evolution. It is not merely the acquirement of knowledge, the accumulation of facts, the gleaning of experience; but far more, the *evolution of the capacity to understand.* Everyone has a sufficient store of facts and no dearth of experiences, yet how much does the average person really know of his own nature? How much does he really comprehend of eternal nature?

The T.S. movement does not aim to amuse, or merely to satisfy an idle and flashing curiosity. It undertakes to put man on the lines of his higher evolution, to point out the line of least resistance, and so through real knowledge to place one's feet on solid ground, with certain progress and enlightenment forever assured. The individual thus placed becomes a power for good and a powerful factor in the elevation of all humanity. For the individual to maintain this position amid all the distractions and vicissitudes of life, requires devotion and a persistent determination born of conviction and fed by enthusiasm. Very few can either attain to or maintain this condition alone. It requires great concentration and a very strong will. Enthusiasm is contagious, and true devotion exerts a powerful influence on others, and herein lies the power of coöperation and organization. The pathway of the T.S. from the very beginning of its career is strewn with disaffected and discouraged members, individuals who have at

first seemed greatly interested, and who bid fair to be of great service to the cause. All at once their enthusiasm began to cool, they ceased to attend the meetings, and while still professing a mild assent or even a firm conviction of the truth of some of the doctrines, find neither inspiration nor satisfaction as before. And why? Simply because of cold, selfish indifference regarding the work of the T.S. Convictions never struck root deep enough to uproot selfishness. In other words, there was no real devotion, hence no lasting enthusiasm. It is thus that in working unselfishly and unceasingly for the Cause one works best for himself, and that the ebb and flow of personal feeling is held to a uniform tide of progress through the mutual coöperation and devotion of others. The T.S. loses the work and hearty coöperation of these members, for it needs them greatly, but the greater losers by far are those members themselves, though they are often unaware how great their loss is, or how to retrieve it, and so doubtless many of them will remain till another incarnation, and go on repeating again and again the same half-hearted experiments. Apathy of the soul is in this way engendered and the seed sown for many miseries and future pain. Those who are wholly indifferent or violently opposed to the T. S. doctrines come under no such category. They have, indeed, their own Karma, but they do not sin against light and knowledge, nor stifle the better intuitions of the soul.

QUESTION CCLXXXI.

If the Theosophical Society is, as it claims, under the protection of the Masters, why did they not prevent the defalcation at Adyar? Men with so much knowledge must have read in the thoughts of the Treasurer that he was defaulting, or, even before the act, that he intended doing so: why, then, could or would they not notify the President directly or indirectly?

Ans.—This question is almost childish. The Universe is under the protection of God, and yet He does not interpose to prevent ignorance and wrong, even crime. Their existence

does not disprove His. Neither does it the existence of Masters.

The notion that Masters, because indefinitely wise and strong, should artificially arrest all action which is not in accord with their high plans, must seem to one of them as laughable an absurdity as any ever entering the human mind. The whole of evolution, individual and social, is rooted in the doctrine that man of his own free-will is to advance from point to point, using experience as his guide and absorbing its lessons at every step. Certain facts lie patent before him, and, if he will not heed them, ensure his stumbling till he does. Very gradually, through repeated and incessant incidents, the laws of life shape themselves before the eye, and character forms as men digestt he essence of what they have been through. The process is slow, for only a little is at any one time learned, and many occasions must repeat themselves before their teaching is thoroughly impressed on the mind. This is true equally of individuals as of the race; the purpose of evolution requiring that men shall expand and strengthen through interior development prompted by exterior experience. The rate of it depends upon effort upheld by will, and only as both are strong does a steady growth occur. Such a growth has permanence because the accretion of self-exertion, and it has value because from actual, direct training. There are, of course, helps and guidance, for those of larger wisdom are ever ready to counsel the inexperienced, and one of the functions of human society is mutual succor and support. But coërcion, or an approximation to it, would vitiate the whole process, impair the integrity of the will, prevent the formation of real character, and substitute an artificial moulding for a natural growth.

Interference by known superiors would be virtual coërcion. If habitual, it would displace all ordinary prevision and care, resulting in an almost necessitated turning-over of interests to the charge of those superiors and a vacating of personal responsibility. No man would concern himself to plan or arrange or project if he knew that at any moment interposition might come from a quarter which could not be disregarded. He

would naturally, and very properly, retire from affairs as to which effort was useless. Thus would come about indolence, heedlessness, distrust of foresight, as well as loss of self-reliance, care, sagacity, and prudence. Evolution of character would be thwarted, and men would remain children forever.

In measure the same would be true if interposition, even though not habitual, was frequent. Once let it be understood that there are Powers ready to intervene whenever there is danger of things going wrong, trust in those Powers will dislodge trust in the normal resources of humanity. Men's minds will be deflected away from culture of native endowments to expectation of supernal help. Ordinary safeguards will be neglected in favor of the greater assurance promised. And so caution would decline, and ingenuity abate, and wisdom dwindle. The overshadowing security could not but dwarf growth of personal responsibility.

Masters have never for a moment intimated any willingness to arrest the natural law of development, the law under which They became what They are and under which we are to become as They—if we do. They have, on the contrary, explicitly stated that They work with, not against, Karma, and have neither the wish nor the power to override or annul the salutary system of Nature. They are servants of Law, not controllers of it.

Yet this by no means impairs Their function as glad helpers of inferior workers. A parent or tutor aids a child in his lessons and prompts him to effort by judicious exhibition of his own attainments; but the child has to study his lessons himself and to digest for himself the incidents of the school-room and the home. So Masters assist us in right effort when we make it, and in many ways, all in accordance with the principle of help rather than of substitution, give us larger ideas and greater strength and richer purpose. A man who works for the Theosophical Society, using to its best whatever he has of experience and thought and foresight, will find his powers grow, just as plants grow when they have favoring sunlight and judicious attention. The attempt invites the aid. Under that fostering influence more, very naturally, can be accomplished

than without it, and the resources expand with their successful use. But never is the pupil constrained or over-awed or forcibly deprived of either the need for exertion or the methods to it.

Masters might, no doubt, have revealed and thereby checked the Adyar frauds. But at what cost? At the cost of a violated law of human evolution, at the cost of a deteriorated sense of precautionary requirement, at the cost of future carelessness ensuring worse disaster than the present. The Theosophical Society has to learn, as truly as and by the same experience as other organizations, what are the conditions to successful management, and it would not so learn if it was denied that experience. *En passant*, one result of the late experience may be a suspicion as to the wisdom in such a Society of endowments and permanent funds. They create a temptation to the hypocritical and dishonest, and tend to impair in members a sense of the duty and privilege of continual help to the work. If, indeed, this is the true view, its acquirement through recent losses may not have been too dear.

QUESTION CCLXXXII.

Miss Katharine Hillard on page 8 of "Evolution according to Theosophy" says: "Beginning with the dawn of manifestation, we are told that the first flutter of awakening life is towards the center, the contractive force of the Great Breath". In the "Secret Doctrine", Stanza 3, page 62, and page 64, the teaching seems otherwise. If we are making a spiral circle, must not the first movement be from, and the last movement to, the center?

I wish to know the truth about it, as I had constructed a very pretty "moral lesson" upon my idea of it, and, if I am wrong, I must tell the Class so.

Clodd in his "History of Creation", page 120, seems to agree with Miss Hillard. He says: "At the beginning of the present Universe, matter was a diffused mass. Force, acting on that mass, drew its particles together, and the resulting collision set free the stored-up energy".

K H.—The question of the "Great Breath" has nothing to

do with the progress of *humanity*, whether in a spiral or otherwise. On pp. 11-12, vol. I of the *Secret Doctrine* there is a quotation from the *Occult Catechism*, and two or three notes explaining it. "The Breath which is eternal" is said to proceed "from without inwardly" (that is, by contraction) at the dawn of the manvantaric period, or the great reëvolution after one of the complete periodical dissolutions of every compound form in nature, but "from within outwardly" in a partial or local manvantara. After an absolute pralaya, then, the *Breath* is said to be "everywhere", it acts from without inwardly; after a minor pralaya, everything having remained, so to speak, in a condition of suspended animation, the resurrection of the planet or planets begins "from within outwardly", *i.e.*, expansion. And see also the quotation from Herbert Spencer, who begins with *concentration*, or contraction. The sentence referred to by the questioner, on p. 62, as to "the mother" expanding "from within without", is explained as "not an expansion from a small centre or focus, but without reference to size or limitation or area, meaning the development of limitless subjectivity into as limitless objectivity". As the "Great Breath" is ceaseless, its motion during pralaya has been compared to the rhythmical motions of the unconscious Ocean, and, being ceaseless, neither inhalation nor exhalation can properly be spoken of as "first". In the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, No. II, p. 32, the same subject is treated, and here again "time of manifestation" and "objectivity of form" are associated with *contraction* and the "breath of the Mother".

And I think the quotation from Clodd expresses the same idea, that at the beginning of the universe diffused matter must contract by the action of that force which, by drawing its particles together, initiates the development from the ethereal into the dense and solid forms. Such subjects as the "Great Breath" are, of course, far beyond our reach, and we can only catch, through the analogies of matter *as we know it*, some partial glimpses of the truth. The fact that the passages quoted from the *Secret Doctrine* refer to different periods of evolution disposes, I think, of any contradiction in their statements.

QUESTION CCLXXXIII.

Before I was a member of the T.S. I held with Max Müller and others that Nirvana means nothingness, extinction, or something like it. Afterwards I understood that it means the reünion of the soul with God (the source of all that is). Now, after reading Path's article on "The Final Choice", I find that I must again mistake, for if there are souls who will renounce the highest bliss of Nirvana for the sake of humanity, then those souls would be far more divine than all that could be found in Nirvana, and consequently it cannot be the highest state of perfection. But what is it, then?

Ans.—It is undoubtedly true that Nirvana does not mean extinction, and the misconception by Western Orientalists has been amply explained by various authorities and in various essays. It is really an expansion of consciousness beyond conceivable limits, and is thus a merging into the Infinite. Yet, evidently, there may be degrees of such mergence. And that Nirvana does not express the ultimate degree is clear from the term "Para-Nirvana",—a state beyond Nirvana.

If there is a Para-Nirvanic state, there must be a Para-Nirvanic character to entitle to that state. And if a character rounded in wisdom, goodness, and power, a character such as is possessed by a Mahâtma who has achieved the right to Nirvana and stands before its open door, is the passport to Nirvana, something even more than this must be exacted of one who would enter the still more advanced realm. Now it is quite conceivable that this extra trait—this super-perfection, if one can so speak—may be that crowning abnegation of self which discards the reward, the just dues, of perfection in order that humanity may be longer served This would make Para-Nirvana the ultimate recompense to a Nirmanakaya,—not, indeed, sought or purposed, but none the less legitimately owed.

The return of the spark of Divinity, the Ego, to its Divine origin is, as we know, accomplished through an exceedingly long and diversified route. Its enrichment with varied experience by a transit across the region of matter involves innu-

merable contacts with different conditions, incidents, sufferings, disciplines. The upward course brings it continually nearer to the Divine. Every manifestation of a really Divine quality shows that for the moment that quality is in the ascendant. Such manifestations multiply as the Divine element more and more pervades the whole character and becomes habitually operative. At last, imperfect elements having been eliminated and the perfect ones in full possession, the Buddhi-Manas, united to Atma, is truly God-like, and so is fit for a God-like existence.

Yet—putting a truth in a metaphor—passage within the confines of Divinity is not arrival at its heart. If, as says Occultism, the universe is mirrored in each man, and if, as is certain, he only gradually reflects it more fully and more perfectly, there can be no epoch fixed when he will completely reflect the whole, *i.e.*, contain the boundless. Rather would the progression seem virtually eternal: certainly we cannot imagine any point when the human would be so transformed into God that it would actually *be* God in an exhaustive sense. At all events, we may allow that assimilation, identification with the Divine can indefinitely go on, stage succeeding stage and successive veils uplifting. But if this be so, Nirvana need not be a finality, nor even Para-Nirvana. And it would further follow that, as the Question states, a Nirmanakaya (a Mahâtma rejecting Nirvana in order to serve humanity) may be even of a higher Divine grade than any content of Nirvana, and also that there may be higher Divine grades than any content of Para-Nirvana.

Of course this is speculative. But so must be any treatment of regions and facts so far beyond any possible reach of human faculty. All the same, it goes to show that there is no necessary inconsistency between the doctrines of Nirvana and "The Final Choice", and that the successive positions of a student may be taken from larger reading, broader thought, and better apprehension.

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